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PORTRAIT OF THE INFANTA MARIA THERESA
WIFE OF LOUIS XIV.

BY DIEGO VELASQUEZ, 1599-1660

Gift of Mrs. Edwin Farnham Greene, 1922



**Portrait of the Infanta Maria Theresa
by Velasquez**

THIS valuable painting is the generous gift of Mrs. Edwin Farnham Greene in memory of John Howard and Charlotte Peabody Nichols.

The subject of the painting was the daughter of Philip IV of Spain and Elizabeth of France. Born in 1638, this portrait represents her at the age of fourteen or fifteen years. Seven years later she was married to Louis XIV, and died in 1683. As a wife, she was "the most amiable of Austrian princesses, who, though eclipsed in her own court, and in her husband's affections, aspired in an age of universal gallantry to no higher praise than the name of a loving mother and a true and gentle wife."

We owe to the researches of Professor Heinrich Zimmermann of the Department of the History of Art of the Federal (late Imperial) Gallery at Vienna the recorded history of this painting. The first reference to it appears in a despatch under date of February 22, 1653, in which Conte Ottobelli, minister from Modena, writing from Madrid, advises his duke that Marquis Mattei is leaving for Flanders the following day and that he has been given the portrait of the princess and with it one of the King and the Queen, in his opinion in order to further the marriage of that princess. Giacomo Querini, Venetian minister at the court of Madrid, is also told of this step a few months later, and informs his republic on the 17th of December, 1653, that by order of the King pictures of the princess have been sent to Germany (Vienna) and Flanders addressed to the Emperor and to the Duke Leopold Wilhelm of Flanders respectively; a third one he would send to France as soon as his violent gout would permit. This last had been ordered early in the same year, and Querini wrote specifically: "The picture shall be done by the hand of Velasco, the King's painter." Duke Leopold, Governor-General

of the Spanish Netherlands, was a great connoisseur of painting, and David Teniers the Younger, his court painter, aided him in making his notable collections. All these collections the Duke took with him on his return to Vienna in 1658. In the following year, 1659, an inventory was made and this portrait of the Infanta appeared in it as No. 390: "A portrait in oil on canvas of the Princess of Spain. On her belt are hanging two small watches and at her side is a table with a green cover. An original painting by the King of Spain's painter."

Without giving any reasons for it, Justi in his work on Velasquez labeled the Boston and Vienna portraits as those of Mariana, the second wife of Philip IV, and apparently Beruete and others followed in his wake. These two pictures have appeared for years in the Imperial catalogue, both before and since Justi wrote, as Maria Theresa. The records quoted by Professor Zimmermann show that in 1653 three portraits were painted of Maria Theresa and only one of Queen Mariana, and these three portraits are now traced to Vienna, Boston, and Paris. Moreover, the inventory of Archduke Leopold's collection made in 1659 states that the portrait is that of the princess, and gives a detailed description of it.

It would appear to be the Boston portrait of which Justi wrote in 1883 (although wrongly entitling it Mariana): "Her finest and most interesting portrait, which has recently come to light at Vienna, agrees in almost every particular with the picture preserved in the Belvedere (No. 617) since 1824. The sparkle of the blue eyes is charming; but in the latter the eyes are duller, the modelling in very clear flesh tints less pure and firm. It is surprising how a being so little favored by the Graces and the Muses can please the eye merely by her youth and health. She seems radiant with the first rapture of those festivities which were kept up without interruption in her honour."

In January of last year the painting left the Federal Art-History Museum in Vienna, in exchange for other paintings, and in December was purchased of the new owners and given by Mrs. Greene to the Museum.

This portrait is only one of many in which Velasquez surprises us by his success in depicting his subjects in a formal pose and yet at their ease. It is a surprisingly fresh visual impression. The face has the pink and white glow of health and youth, the hair is of a rich chestnut relieved by the small red ribbons at the end of each ringlet; and the dress is a silvery white, a color much favored by the master. These features are pleasantly heightened by the cool depths of the background and the cold green of the curtain and table cover. The whole shows the full mastery, the great simplicity, certainty and ease of the painter.

For nearly thirty years Velasquez had been court painter to Philip IV. Called home from Italy in 1651 by his royal master, who was impatient for

his return, he was appointed Grand Marshal of the palace in 1652, and the very same year was commanded to paint two portraits of the Infanta Maria Theresa, and, as we have seen, a third in the following year. The Museum painting is an example of his third period, painted after his return from his second visit to Italy. He was then at the height of his skill and knowledge of technique. His mastery of form and atmosphere at this time is the despair of painters. One marvels at the simple but speaking eyes, at the masterly drawing of the hoop dress, which stands forth in all the reality of its stiff form. One is astonished at the receding background and the ease and assurance with which the ruff, the cuffs, and bows have been punctuated with red strokes or dashes. All is done in an apparently artless manner and with the simplicity and serenity of a master hand. There is no complexity of color scheme or laborious mixing of pigments, for three or four colors suffice. Any earlier dryness and hardness of color, any over-definition of values, by which persons more familiar with his earlier pictures expect to recognize and identify his later paintings, have been left behind, and the master has reached the truer stage of light radiation. Indeed his rendering of the exact relations of light and color is almost incredible.

His countrymen say that he was by this time long-sighted, and they speak of his summary (*abreviada*) style and of his use of long brushes and liquid colors; but if he were long-sighted surely he was so in the mental and not in the physical sense. He certainly had handicaps, for his position as Grand Marshal of the palace involved him in duties both onerous and exacting. It is generally thought that his death in 1660 was hastened by the arduous task of arranging early in that year the great establishments on the Island of Pheasants in the Bidasoa on the occasion of the marriage of Maria Theresa to Louis XIV of France. C. H. H.

Recent Acquisitions of the Print Department

THE Museum may well be proud of its recent acquisitions of prints, which, added to the prints already in its possession, make this collection rank in quality with the five great print cabinets of Europe.

In obtaining fifteenth century prints, increasingly rare and difficult to secure in good impressions, the Curator has been particularly fortunate this past year.

Among the Italian masters, Cristofano Robetta (1463-1522) merits special attention. Many of his prints are adaptations and copies, while fragments of background in some of his plates are strongly affected by Dürer, whose influence was just beginning to be felt in Italy. But it is in his original prints that Robetta is most pleasing, and in his "Adam and Eve"¹ the full beauty of his work

can be appreciated. Hind lists four impressions only of the first state of the "Adam and Eve"; this one has been described as "the finest known," and, in all probability, correctly so. Though Jacopo de' Barbari (1440-1515) worked for some time in Nuremberg, his engravings are essentially Italian in spirit, and not greatly influenced by Northern models. "The Redeemer,"¹ with little cross-hatching, is in Jacopo's early manner. All his prints are very rare, and it is still rarer to find one of such quality as this. A very fine copy of "The Scourging of Christ (with landscape background),"² supplements the engravings by Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506) and his School already in the collection. Mantegna's influence was strongly felt by numerous contemporary engravers, and among these was Giovanni Antonio da Brescia (flourished circa 1500). His "St. Barbara"³ is a very rare and delicate plate and is not mentioned in the British Museum Catalogue.

It was not until nearly the end of the century that any engravings seem to have been produced at Milan, but it is at this period that we find a most interesting group closely related to the Milanese school of illumination, as seen in the *Sforza Book of Hours*. The "Head of Christ"⁴ is undoubtedly by the Master of the *Sforza Book of Hours*, and is an engraving displaying much austere simplicity and charm. The "Landscape with two men, one playing a lute"⁵ is by an anonymous Veronese engraver who flourished about 1470, and whose style is similar to that of the E series of the so-called Tarocchi cards. The character of the figures and costumes is reminiscent of Pisanello, but the engraving hardly seems earlier than 1470-1480, while the curiously cut streamers of the costume of the seated man occur in the engravings of the Master of the Playing Cards⁶ (Germany 1445-1450). This is an undescribed state before the plate was re-worked, the foreground shaded, etc., and is possibly unique.

Among German engravers of the fifteenth century, Martin Schongauer (1445-1491) stands out as by far the greatest master of that period; he may even be considered the greatest artist-engraver that Germany has ever produced. His "St. James the Greater overcoming the Saracens"⁷ is a large and important print, and our impression is superb. Superb also are impressions of "The Fourth Wise Virgin"⁸ and "The Second Foolish Virgin."⁹ Schongauer's influence is to some extent shown in the engraver who is known by the signature LCz. In spite of certain elements in his prints which show Netherlandish tendencies, it is more than probable

¹Bartsch VII. 518, 3. Hind p. 449, 7. Collection: Prideaux.

²Bartsch XIII. 227, 1 (Copy). Hind p. 347, 4*.

³Passavant V. 108, 37. Collection: Hefner-Altenneck.

⁴Hind p. 396, 3.

⁵Hind E. III p. 285, 20. Passavant V. 189, 102.

⁶Catalogue of Early Italian Engravings . . . in the British Museum, by A. M. Hind, p. 285.

⁷Bartsch VI. 143, 53.

⁸Bartsch VI. 154, 80. Collection: Kalle.

⁹Bartsch VI. 155, 83.

¹Bartsch XIII. 395, 4. Hind p. 197, 1. Collection: Davidsohn.